

March 26, 1962

Dr. Gunther S. Stent
Virus Laboratory
University of California
Berkeley 4, California

Dear Gunther:

I am asking my assistant to check the cultures number 58 and 58-161, and if they still show the expected biotin requirement, you will receive them very shortly. If you don't get them within the next week or two it will be because we have some trouble about retrieving them.

Just for the record, the history of these cultures is as follows:

K12 → 58 → 51-161 → W6
Biotin⁻ Biotin⁻ Methionine⁻
 Methionine⁻ Biotin⁺

Strain 58 was the first auxotrophic mutant to be isolated from E. coli (by Gray and Tatum, 1944). 58-161 was a second stage auxotroph reported by Tatum in 1945. Between 1948 and 1952 Difco Nutrient Agar became relatively deficient in Biotin, unknown to us at the time.

While it is not at all obvious what explicit contribution these cultures can make to the understanding of the "relaxed" mutation, they may at least clear up when this came into the line. And of course it is just possible that it has something to do with the reversion of the Biotin requirement.

The meeting was a great success, I think, not so much from the standpoint of any world shaking concept or ideas but to maintain close touch with what all of our friends are doing. The concepts about the code-scrambling (and I think this should be carefully distinguished from code-switching) mechanism of action of suppressors is one of the most exciting things to be coming out for a long time.

We will be leaving for Japan in less than two weeks, but we look forward to seeing more of you and Inga shortly thereafter. Maybe we can compare notes!

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

G. S. Stent